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E.O. 12958: DECL: 06/22/2016
TAGS: PGOV, PINR, PREL, MX
SUBJECT: FINAL POLLS GIVE NARROW LEAD TO LOPEZ OBRADOR

REF: MEXICO 3325

Classified By: ACTING POLITICAL MINISTER-COUNSELOR ALAN D. MELTZER, REA
SONS: 1.4(B/D).

1. (SBU) Summary: Over the last several days, Mexican polling firms have released the results of the final round of polls to be published before the July 2 election. The five most influential polls in Mexico all give a narrow lead of between two and four percent to the Party of the Democratic Revolution's (PRD) Andres Manuel Lopez Obrador (AMLO), over the National Action Party's (PAN) Felipe Calderon. AMLO's lead over Calderon is generally within the polls' margin of error. Roberto Madrazo of the long-governing Institutional Revolutionary Party (PRI) consistently polls in third place, trailing Calderon by anywhere between one and nine percent. Polling of likely congressional results suggests that the Congress will be relatively evenly divided between the three major parties and that the PRI faces a significant possibility of losing its first place position, and could even drop to third place, particularly in the Chamber of Deputies. At a panel discussion today among some of Mexico's leading polling experts, most concurred that AMLO's lead over Calderon was too narrow to be able to predict the outcome of the election and that numerous factors could influence the

outcome. End summary.

AMLO Enjoys the Edge in What Remains a "Technical Tie"

2. (C) As Mexican electoral law does not permit polls to be published after June 23, major polling firms have released the results of their final pre-election firms over the last few days. The five most influential Mexican polls all give a slight advantage to AMLO, albeit his margin is generally within the margin of error of each poll. According to the average of the five polls, AMLO leads Calderon by 36% to 32.8%, with a third place Roberto Madrazo polling 26.9%. Individually, the polls show the following results: Parametria/Excelsior: AMLO 36.5%, Calderon 32.5%, Madrazo 27%; Reforma: AMLO 36%, Calderon 34%, Madrazo 25%; Mitofsky: AMLO 36%, Calderon 33%, and Madrazo 27%; Maria de las Heras/Milenio: AMLO 35.4%, Calderon 30.5%, and Madrazo 29.6%; and Universal: AMLO 36%, Calderon 34%, and Madrazo 26%. We note that the Parametria poll -- which shows one of the largest leads for AMLO -- was released four days earlier than the Reforma and Universal polls and therefore may not reflect the very latest trends. It is also worth noting that the Milenio poll has consistently been the most favorable to Roberto Madrazo and the least favorable to Felipe Calderon.

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3. (SBU) Poll results for congressional races were somewhat less consistent than those for the presidential race. None of the polls showed one party winning an absolute majority in either chamber of Congress and most predicted that the chambers would be divided into relatively equal thirds. The average poll results for the Chamber of Deputies predicts that the PAN will win 33% of the vote, the PRI 32% and the PRD 31%. The Senate is divided equally narrowly: the PRI is predicted to win 33%, the PAN 33% and the PRD 30%.

The Mexican Electorate Can be Volatile

4. (SBU) On June 23, the Colegio de Mexico sponsored a panel discussion in which many of Mexico's leading pollsters (including those responsible for the Reforma, Milenio and Mitofsky polls) as well as political analysts, discussed the latest opinion trends. The majority of the speakers concurred that while AMLO enjoyed a lead of approximately two points, the race was too close to call. As Mitofsky's Roy Campos phrased it, AMLO's margin was not large enough "to

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enable the polls to reliably pick the winner." Several pointed out that at this point in the 2000 campaign, the average of all polls showed the PRI with a 2.7% lead over the PAN. While that margin narrowed in subsequent, pre-election (but unpublished) tracking polls, the PAN never managed to take the lead before Election Day. Nevertheless, on Election Day 2000, PAN candidate Vicente Fox defeated his PRI opponent by a margin of over 6%.

5. (SBU) The speakers singled out a number of other factors that could influence the outcome. At least one noted that AMLO's strongest support was among the poor and uneducated, populations that were least likely to vote. Accordingly, a low participation rate would tend to favor the PAN and PRI, and the parties' get-out-the-vote operations could prove

decisive on Election Day. Undecided voters appear to favor AMLO, while those "voting strategically" -- i.e., would-be PRI voters who decide to vote for their second choice candidate due to Madrazo's reduced chances -- tend to narrowly favor Calderon. Those voting for change -- the sentiment that prevailed on Election Day 2000 -- would be expected to break for AMLO. Several noted that media advertising had played a major role in the campaign to date, and in a race this close, the candidates' final media drive could influence the outcome.

Comment: Down to the Wire

6. (C) While AMLO's lead over Calderon is within the polls' margin of error, one cannot ignore the fact that all five major polls reflect this lead. On the other hand, notwithstanding AMLO's slight advantage, the Mexican electorate -- only recently liberated from a one party system -- has proven itself volatile in the past, and questions remain about AMLO's ability to get many of his supporters to the polls. Under these circumstances, we believe the race truly remains too close to call.

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